



More Than 10 Years of Families Helping Families

March 16, 2009

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Senator Thomas P. Gaffey, Co-Chair
Representative Andrew M. Fleishmann, Co-Chair
Education Committee
Room 3100, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Raised Bill #6666

Dear Education Committee Members:

We the members of CT FEAT (Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment) wish to express our full and ardent support of HB 6666 section 7 which will require school districts to utilize Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA's) for the implementation of an individual education plan which includes applied behavior analytic services.

CT FEAT is a non-profit organization formed by parents and family members to provide information resources regarding effective treatments validated by research. "Currently, methods derived from the science of ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) meet the standards of scientific proof that are required by IDEA 2004, and there are no other scientifically valid treatments for autism that produce similar treatment, educational, or outcome results."

- Metz, Mulick, & Butter, (2005); Newsom & Hovanitz, 2005; Smith, 2005

Learning among many children with autism is typically preempted by negative behaviors such as aggression, self-injurious behaviors and temper tantrums. Learning may not begin before these behaviors are arrested. An appropriate and effective behavior plan is the first step in the implementation of an educational plan. The underlying cause(s) of an autistic child's behavior are extremely complex and perplexing to decipher. A highly skilled professional such as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst is an absolute necessity to unravel the behavior and to create a successful behavior plan. Without the proper input from someone who has the necessary education and practical experience, a poorly written or implemented behavior plan may exacerbate the child's antisocial behaviors. In addition, success with these children can be fleeting. Continued success depends upon the monitoring of their behaviors and the modifying and updating of behavior plans to the changing behavioral needs of the child.

This bill will not mandate every child receive applied behavior analytic services as part of their individual education plan. Only a Pupil Placement Team may legally decide this issue. Instead, the bill will guarantee those students requiring applied behavior analytic services receive those services from a certified professional who will provide effective intervention.

We cannot understate how complex and difficult these behaviors can be to decipher. Unfortunately, our members have shared horror stories about well-intentioned teachers or psychologists who have attempted to write behavior plans without the knowledge necessary for success. Flaws in these plans that result from a lack of comprehensive understanding of behavioral science result in an increase in antisocial behaviors, extreme frustration for the student and the creation of an environment that makes learning impossible. Improperly supervised and untrained therapists frequently inadvertently *teach* antisocial behaviors. The intervention from a certified professional will prevent such poor outcomes for students.

We would never consider educating our children with unqualified teachers or treating their illnesses with unqualified medical personnel. Likewise a successful outcome for our autistic population is conditional upon intervention from qualified agents. The Board Certified Behavior Analyst is that indispensable resource for these children.

We strongly urge you to vote in favor of raised HB 6666. The children with autism in the state of Connecticut deserve the qualified professionals necessary to ensure an appropriate and effective education.

Sincerely,

Beth Lambert

Beth Lambert, President